



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

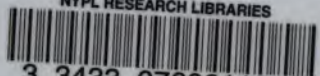
We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



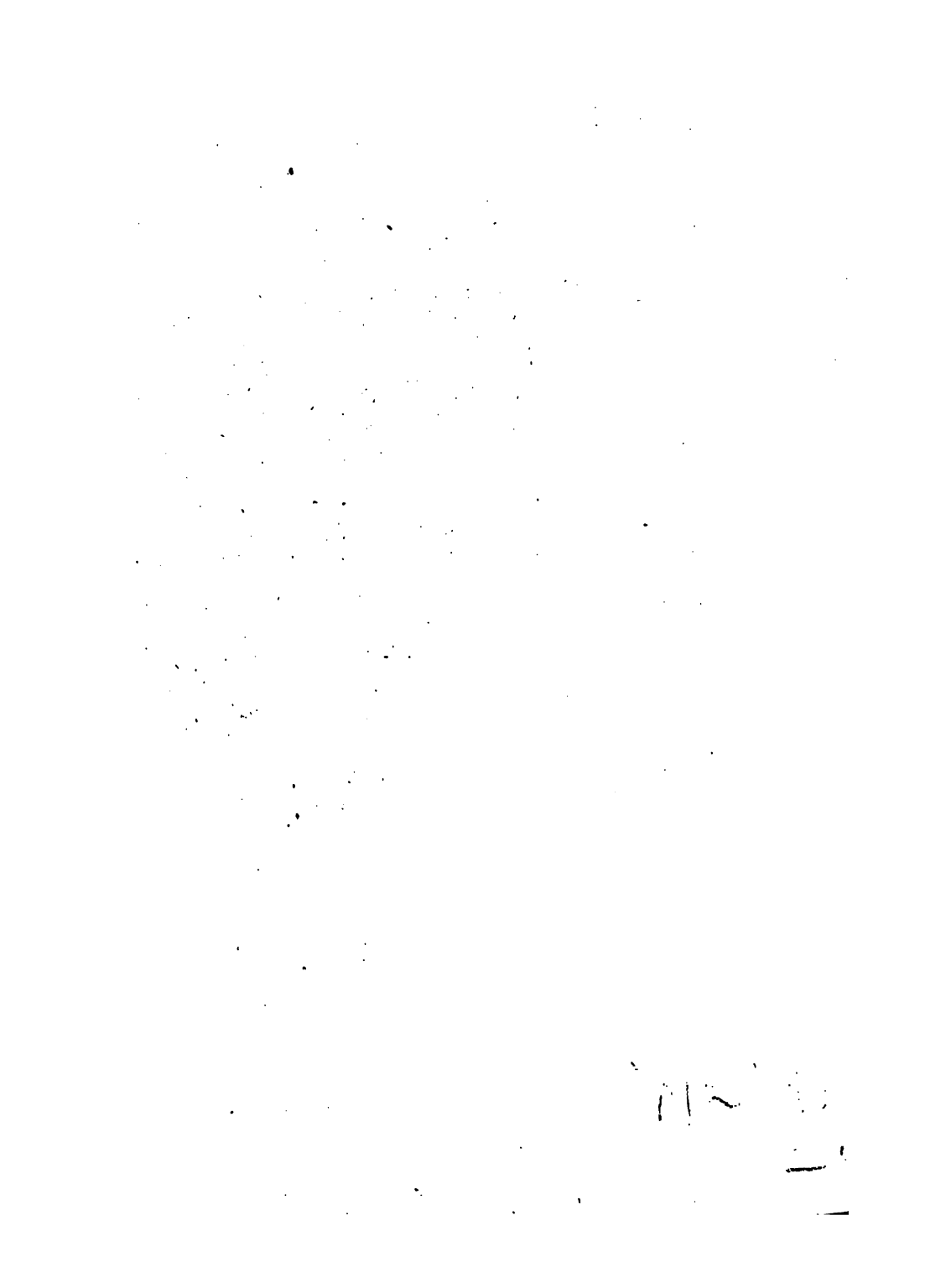
3 3433 07606113 8



WALDO

By Nigel Waldo







1

2

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS



“‘BETTY!’ THE MAN IN KHAKE REPEATED, TAKING BOTH HER
HANDS.”

[PAGE 56]

8/27/18
B.

WALLFLOWERS

4.

BY

NIGEL WALDO

ILLUSTRATED BY

ARTHUR LITLÉ

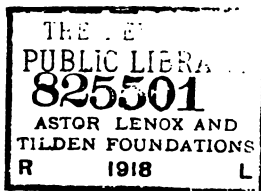
NEW YORK

THE HANNIS JORDAN COMPANY

PUBLISHERS

200 P. 1918

NEW YORK
PUBLIC
LIBRARY



COPYRIGHT, 1918, BY
THE HANNIS JORDAN COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

NEW YORK
JAN 1918
VIA TEL.

TO
THE BOYS OF THE U. S. A.

WALLFLOWERS

I

“Well, Captain of Industry, how do you like it?”

Robert Whitney lifted his eyes from the papers upon which he was working at his roll-top desk, glanced over his shoulder, and sprang to his feet. Framed in the factory doorway the questioner stood, blocking out the brilliant ray of sunshine that a moment before had fallen across the floor and the wraith of steam that the wind was blowing from one of the exhaust pipes, sending it like a grey cloud before the office windows.

“Phil! Where under the sun did you

WALLFLOWERS

come from?" Whitney extended his hand, his fountain pen still held between his fingers.

"You're the last one I expected to see out this way," he said to his caller. "Thought by this time you'd be 'over there'."

"I've something to do 'over here' before I can clear out for 'over there'," the visitor said. "I'm here on a Government errand now—arranging to buy up things, you know. Maybe you're in line for some good orders?"

"Hope so," Whitney answered. "Anything we can do for Uncle Sam we'll do, as far as in us lies, and we won't quarrel about prices, either."

Robert Whitney led his caller across the room, seated him, and rang for his

WALLFLOWERS

stenographer. He handed the girl the long sheets of paper with their corrected rows of figures, gave her a few brief instructions, and then turned to the man at his elbow.

"I'm at your command now for the rest of the day," he said, relaxing, as though to throw off the tension of work-hours that had gone before.

"First of all," Philip Hayden said, "I want to know how you like it—like being a Captain of Industry. It's hard to imagine you in the rôle, Rob, you know, old chap. But, by Jove, you have a look about you as though you fitted right into the place—it isn't the look you wore at college, that's certain."

Whitney leaned forward earnestly.

"It's up to me to make good, Phil.

WALLFLOWERS

Father's got his heart set on it, and I couldn't disappoint him. I would have preferred a profession—but the Governor belongs to the old school of men, you know—he wanted a son in the big bustle of trade, could not see it any other way; so I came out here to the Middle-West, took hold of the factory end of the thing—and, well, you say we may get a share of the Government's business. That shows we are going some, are big enough to consider. And I'll tell you, after all, I believe this building and making and moulding and selling is a big enough game, a great enough game for anyone. Modern business is not confined, as business once was, to a limited community. It touches the ends of the earth, and then some. Days it seems to me to go as far

WALLFLOWERS

as Heaven itself—and, dig down into Hell.”

Hayden listened quietly, moved and swayed by the intensity, the fire of the man who was speaking, a man so little past boyhood that the sense of stability that he somehow displayed made one forget his years and turn to him as an already established foundation upon which to build success, whatever the line of endeavor.

“I want you to show me about, Rob,” Hayden said, “since you say you are at my command for the balance of the day. It isn’t quitting time yet, I know, and so I can see the thing in operation. It’s all metal and pounding, I know, but I guess there’s a soul hidden away in it all somewhere; and if there is, you’re the

WALLFLOWERS

man to show where it is—I have a feeling you have already somehow got hold of it.”

“Soul!” Whitney exclaimed. “A man out buying for the Government, and talking about *soul*! But you are right—there is a soul hidden in the thing. There is pride, and endeavor, and, yes, hope, wrapped up in every casting sent out. To the world it is only a bulk of iron or steel or brass or copper. But to the man who makes it, it is shape and form, and a perfected thing. That’s where the soul gets into it—it was born first in somebody’s brain; every little bolt and screw kept somebody awake nights; maybe somebody went without a meal to pay for the first casting of the model.”

The two men moved on through a

WALLFLOWERS

labyrinth of whirring wheels, belting that moved like a streak of lightning, and the noise soon became deafening. The welding of metal somewhere off at the right sounded like an anvil chorus. Entering a furnace room, or, rather, standing at the door, was like a peep into an inferno. Red and yellow flames were leaping up, molten metal was pouring down.

Philip Hayden drew back from the heat. He thrust his hands in his pockets and looked his guide over from top to toe. "And you are the boss!" he said.

Whitney smiled back at him pleasantly.

"Yes," he answered, "if it is possible for such a place to have a boss. Mine is the humble task—I feel it is humble when I look at all these workers—of fixing wages, seeing that payrolls are properly

WALLFLOWERS

kept, that bills are paid—that everyone is at his work—that is, I see that the superintendents and heads of departments see. But the real boss of the whole thing, as I see it, is the worker whose ability and willingness, whose genius, if you are pleased to put it that way, makes it possible for him to work at the task and keeps him there. He's the real boss. Without him, the wheels of industry would stop, and all my ability to figure on finances would not make it go."

"Your father was right when he put *you* here, and no mistake," Hayden said, "and if you don't mind, when I get back East I'm going to call on him and tell him so."

"Do—will you do that? That's fine."

The young man's face lighted up with

WALLFLOWERS

a pleasure so simple that his friend wondered at it. Here was a man wholly lacking in conceit, that was certain. Not one in a million with such vast responsibility thrown upon his shoulders but would have assumed some show of superiority over his fellows of less wealth and importance. Just a word of praise to his father, for whose sake he was so anxious to "make good," was enough reward for him after all the months of strenuous work.

Returning to the office, the Government's representative put before his friend the possibilities that lay in filling certain Government orders, and, figuring and discussing various points, the conclusion was reached that the plant could take care of what was wanted, meet prices

WALLFLOWERS

and get forward the "goods" in short order.

"I'll get it all on the way before I leave," Whitney assured Hayden.

"Before you leave!" Hayden exclaimed. "Where on earth are you going? I thought you were a fixture here."

"I'm going—'over there,' of course," Whitney said quietly. "There are plenty of men able to run this job, and every man is needed 'over there' to run that. I couldn't do less than enlist—and I've been called. Father knows this—he's always game, you know. He's with me on it—but there's Mother. I tell you, that's the one hard part. But she's game, too, and would be the last to have me hold back."

The young men were walking down

WALLFLOWERS

the roadway leading from the factory yards.

“I walk to my rooms,” Whitney was saying. “I don’t just like to have my car pull up at the door when my men are going home in overalls and swinging their tin dinner-pails in their hands. They’ve worked harder all day than I have—speaking from a physical standpoint—and if they can walk, I can.”

“Jeffersonian simplicity,” Hayden observed.

“And why not?” Whitney questioned. “Aren’t we preaching Democracy to the world just now? Let’s have it for sure. It’s better for a man, anyway. And I tell you, Hayden, when I used to spin along the Great White Way and think the only thing for a fellow was spending

WALLFLOWERS

a lot of money and being a 'good sport,' that was when I didn't know what a real day's work meant, when I didn't know, or realize, how much effort has to be given the world to make it give up a dollar for what one does—I didn't know what the earning of a dollar meant. Now I *know*. I know just what it means to the man who earns three dollars-and-fifty-cents a day and has a wife and two children to keep on that. And I'm not going to ride in a car with 'a man on the box' when I've only a quarter of a mile to walk."

Somehow it was hard to reconcile the Whitney of college days with the man who was swinging along beside him, Hayden realized, but he was braced by this manly strength, and relieved, too, to

WALLFLOWERS

find that his classmate had not had his head turned by success and responsibilities. At college there is a common ground to meet upon, and one does not feel so much the wealth of his fellows as when, the college environment shaken off, one afterward meets the man whom fortune has favored more than oneself in worldly possessions. The dividing line then is, all too often, very defined.

Whitney's rooms had an air about them that bespoke the city-bred man. A manservant let them in, took their hats and canes, and opened a door at the side of the hall through which they entered an apartment combining living-room and library. From this led the "den." In this small room the young manager of one of the greatest industrial plants of the

WALLFLOWERS

Middle-West always felt most at home. To this room he had brought his "traps," as he called them, those things which had intimate association with his college days, and its walls were covered with pictures that pleased his fancy, and autographed photographs were not the least conspicuous of the wall adornments.

"Your wallflowers," Hayden said, with a wave of his hand, as he settled himself, with a laugh, on the great leather couch beneath the wide window. "Celebrated beauties, village maidens—you always had the knack, Rob, of making an extraordinary collection. I'll vow, they ought to make you judge of some beauty show. But who's this? Why isn't she with the wallflowers? Sort of special type of flower, singled out for particular admira-

WALLFLOWERS

tion and favor?" There was the old bantering tone of other days. Hayden had taken from its place on the desk in the corner a little oval picture held in a particularly beautiful gold frame.

Neither of the men had noticed a third person who stood at the door of the den. They had not heard the bell ring, and Whitney had forgotten entirely that he was to have an invited guest for dinner, or that it was so near dinner-time.

"Don't, Hayden," Whitney said almost impatiently, or as though hurt. "Put that down, please— No, she doesn't belong with the 'wallflowers,' as you call them, nor with the 'collection.' "

A rustle of paper caused both men to look in the direction of the door.

"By jove, Winters, I didn't know it

WALLFLOWERS

was dinner-time! I didn't expect you before seven."

"It's precious near that now," the new-comer answered, as he came forward in the room. Whitney introduced the two men. Judson Winters looked Hayden over with a keen, critical eye as though making an appraisal of him, his possible worth and value. It was this look, this always scrutinizing look, that made a man of Robert Whitney's candor and frankness feel himself the very antithesis of a man like Winters. While Hayden was not conscious of the fact, Winters made a memorandum in his mental notebook that he had met Hayden before, and knew his business at the plant—could very readily guess it, business for the Government, and he had his own

WALLFLOWERS

plans, already very well-defined, and dependable, as he thought them, of swinging in another direction this same business. The game of intrigue, of scheming and manœuvring, requires that one begin young if one is to be adept in time. It calls its devotees early and keeps them to the very end; its meshes once entered are not to be easily shaken off. Winters was one of the early chosen. Without analyzing the reason, or attempting, in fact, any analysis of it, Robert Whitney was always conscious of the fact that in Winters' presence he felt a sense of being on guard and a sense of relief when Winters left him.

Winters picked up the little golden frame, held it very deliberately in his hand, and raised questioning eyebrows to

WALLFLOWERS

Whitney, just as deliberately. Whitney said nothing, but took the picture from his hand and with marked deliberation put it in its place on his desk. He knew that Winters had done what he did, simple though the act was, just to irritate him. It was Winters' way, and he could have thrashed him for it, the meaning conveyed by the act was so much deeper than it appeared. He would have ventured some light remark about the good looks of the girl had he dared. But he knew there was a certain expression that could come to Robert Whitney's face that no man dared trifle with. Winters turned to the array of photographs on the wall.

“Your friend has a good name for the collection,” he said—“wallflowers.”

WALLFLOWERS

“They are all nice girls, though,” Whitney declared, for the first time in his life feeling it was necessary to defend his women friends, professional or otherwise, to any man. But had there been among them any whose life could not have stood the searching white light of publicity, he still would have stood at her defense with a man of Winters’ type. While he himself had no sister, he had always taken it for a safe guide and rule in dealing with every girl to think of her as somebody’s sister.

Dinner was midway through when Winters observed, as though coming from a deep reverie: “I knew I’d seen that girl somewhere, Whitney—that girl on your desk. That’s Betty Andrews. Deucedly pretty girl, too, she is—a regular brick of a girl, I should say.”

WALLFLOWERS

Robert Whitney straightened. His strong jaws snapped together.

“Miss Andrews is—is one of the finest girls I have ever met,” he said. “Let’s not discuss her, if you please.”

“Oh, very well—if you’re touchy about it, for any reason, old chap. No harm meant, I am sure. Just happened to recall who she was.”

For the life of him Whitney could hardly keep his hands off Winters, and then he suddenly realized that nothing he had said would in the least justify his getting up and trouncing him. He knew this much, and that was that the little picture in its golden frame would, henceforth, remain in a hidden corner of his desk. It had only been left on the desk that morning by chance.

WALLFLOWERS

The dinner came to an end, and before Winters left he had got from Hayden all the information that he wanted, and thanked his lucky stars that Hayden had happened along about that time. He, Winters, could now proceed with his plans a thousand times better fortified to meet what must be met without stumbling. Knowledge is power, this he had begun to realize, and he used every bit that came his way, often appropriating as his own sagacity, far-sightedness for which the "other fellow" should have been given credit.

Hayden remained for some time after Winters had taken his departure, and together he and Whitney made plans regarding business deals and in their friendly and cordial understanding and

WALLFLOWERS

appreciation of each other the atmosphere with which Winters had enveloped the room, gradually melted away. But before either of them came out of it, before it was altogether banished, Whitney had to take hold of it and strangle it with a frank outburst and denunciation.

“I couldn’t for the life of me say why it is,” he said, shaking his shoulders as though to free himself of an unpleasant burden, and walking up and down the room, “but that fellow Winters gets on my nerves—I feel like trouncing him every time he opens his mouth. I asked him here this evening to get rid of him. I knew he had something on his mind—he still has it there, for he didn’t get it off, as I could see. I thought we could talk it out, whatever it was, and have

WALLFLOWERS

done with it. He never says anything one could take exception to—”

“That is just it,” Hayden interrupted understandingly. “If a fellow like that would only *say* something that one could lick him for—but he doesn’t. It is always under cover, whatever he is up to, and one always feels he is only waiting the chance to spring his surprise, whatever it is, scratch in the dark or when one’s back is turned.”

“That’s just it; you’ve got it, Hayden. It’s that undercurrent sort of thing that’s always maddening. But let’s forget it.”

Both men felt better for relieving some of their pent-up feelings in regard to the departed guest, but Hayden had one more shaft to fling before he could settle easily. “Just watch out for him, though, Rob.

WALLFLOWERS

When you have the measure of a man know he's going to measure up to it some time somewhere. If one is off guard and gets scratched by such, it's his own fault, if he's had a chance to watch the 'small straws' waving and did not notice which way they blew.''

When Robert Whitney leaned from the train window to wave goodbye to the group that stood on the station platform, he held in his hand a travelling bag as good as money could buy, bravely bearing his monogram and filled with all sorts of conveniences a soldier would care for, provided he might carry them to the fighting ground and had time to use them. Down to buttons and thread he was supplied. This gift, the travelling bag, was from the factory workers, the

WALLFLOWERS

buttons and thread, however, from womenfolk of the community, and, truth to tell, his rooms, as he left them in Richards' care, resembled very much a stall at a fair, with pincushions and needlebooks and other things that were mysteries to him. A speech had been made at the town hall in which he was called "a brave young soldier" as well as by the usual "Captain of Industry" phrase, and his many good qualities were lauded until it seemed to him as though he were listening to his funeral oration, as if it was hardly to be expected so many good things would be said of a man still in the flesh. But his heart swelled with a sense of gratitude. He had earned a place among the people, that was certain. He was not the only one going from the

WALLFLOWERS

town, but he was one of them, one of their own, as it were, who was going—he was not an outsider. For a year he had worked in their midst, and his father before him had worked there building up the great industry that had brought a goodly measure of prosperity to the vicinity. It was all hard to leave, harder than he had dreamed it would be, but there was a great battle awaiting all strong and willing young men. He was going right into the ranks. When he had offered his services for the ranks he thought of the story that he had heard told of the old farmer visiting a newspaper plant and after having been shown where all the editors' rooms were asked to see "The men who did the work, who scouted about and got the news, were out in the

WALLFLOWERS

real fight.” They took him then and showed him the city room, with the reporters sitting at their desks, grinding out copy in time to get to press after “scouting” all day. He, Whitney, was not reaching for any plum, he knew there would be plenty who wanted officers’ jobs—he had volunteered for the ranks. If promotion came, he would earn it. It would be the office seeking the man.

A goodbye to home folks, then off for the training camp. The one thing he dreaded was the goodbye at home. Funny he mused, as his train rolled smoothly on, how a fellow feared to face a thing like that, and was not fearing to face the hardships of army life or the dangers of battle. It was not from a contemplation of any of these hardships that he shrank.

WALLFLOWERS

And then it came to him, the realization, that it was because a true soldier does not like to hurt those who love him, that he would shield all such from hurt and sorrow. But his musing led him to the fact that it is after all to shield those one loves that a soldier fights, and he braced up for any ordeal that was to come in the way of leave-takings.

The factory work would go on under able directing. There were older heads than his there to guide. As it was, he had only been under training for the Big Job. A year had not been nearly enough in which to perfect this monumental task. His father would again personally supervise. He was glad of this. The great demands there would so occupy him that he would not feel his son's absence so

WALLFLOWERS

much as he would if he were not in the thick of the industrial battle every day. The Government orders had been undertaken, and the plant would be at work at full capacity for a long time to come. The town, he knew, would be enlivened by the addition of laborers, and even before he had put down his pen on his desk to take it up—when? God only knew—building had begun for the housing of additional men and every available piece of machinery was being turned to account. It was, surely, the day of efficiency and producing to full capacity.

Betty Andrews! The young man's musings here came up with a jolt, they had "met a cropper," as Hayden would have said. Would Betty be sorry that he was going to war? Here was where the

WALLFLOWERS

puzzle came in. He had no right to think that she would be. It was his fault, he felt, that he hadn't even the right to expect Betty to be sorry. It was a case of "faint heart" failing to win "fair lady." Their acquaintance, on the surface, at least, appeared to be only casual. Upon Betty's part maybe it was only that. She had not written of late—but—and a wave of something like horror swept over the soon-to-be warrior—had he answered her last letter? Work, work, work had seemed to so engross him, and from day to day he promised himself he would do things that somehow did not get themselves done. Her picture was with him, slipped from its golden frame into an envelope that now rested at the very bottom of his travelling bag. He

WALLFLOWERS

realized that he didn't even know where Betty was at this moment. His mother had written him that she was visiting somewhere—he felt in his pocket for his mother's letter, and then remembered he had not brought it with him. But he would ask when he got home—or did his mother say where she had gone? He recalled only that she had said Betty was away visiting somewhere. But when a fellow is going off to fight he may be pardoned if he rushes in abruptly and lays his heart at a lady's feet. This is what he would do. With Betty waiting for him he knew that he could fight a thousandfold better. It is always the girl that's left behind that's the inspiration. What would be the use of returning a hero if there were no one about to

WALLFLOWERS

be especially proud of one? “It’s ‘The Girl behind the Man behind the Gun,’ sure enough,” Whitney concluded as his line of thought ran into another channel, the realization of the seriousness of war, the sacrifices it demanded, the young blood that it spilled, the hearts that it broke, the lands that it devastated. It was a serious young man that left the train the next day at his home station and walked in, all unannounced, as the household was gathered at dinner, a man grown years older in just the passing of a year, a man who had come in close and intimate touch with the serious business of living.

II

Robert Whitney had learned to stand at attention, to salute his Captain, to carry a gun, to set up a tent, to dig a trench, and sleep quite comfortably rolled up in a blanket. These same things, and a number of other things not in the regular run of everyday life, a number of hundreds of other fellows about him had learned equally well during the passing months. The training camp was a beehive, brown bees buzzing all about. Whitney thought at times that if the khaki were a little more yellow the swarm of them would look for all the world like wasps as they clustered in groups for one task or another. As it was, the long

WALLFLOWERS

file marching along were like a file of ants going over hills and down dales. It was strenuous, but it was a man's job and he didn't mind. If he were to be promoted from the ranks he would get there through his worth-while work; and if promotion never came, then what of it? He would have done his bit, a cog in the wheel, and a cog is never to be despised. The most beautifully red-painted and showy wheel in the world can not turn without the cog. He was not alone in this idea; he did not expect to be. He knew he would find many other fellows just like himself, self-forgetting in the accomplishment of the great aim of the conflict.

"Better brush up a bit, Major," Edward Prentice called to him as he was shining his own shoes with a piece of rough

WALLFLOWERS

cloth. "We're going into society tonight, for a change."

"The deuce we are!" Whitney answered, turning squarely around upon his tent mate. "Where?"

"Oh, the Hunters are giving us a party. Some swell place they've got, too, old man. Know 'em?"

"Know who they are, of course. Have you ever met any of them? Two pretty daughters, I believe."

"Yes," Prentice replied. "We all used to fairly grovel in the dust with gratitude when we were asked down there for a week end. That was ages and ages ago—last summer, you know. Now we go as from the ranks of the great 'masses,' a sort of benevolence, you know, to let us frisk about their lawn and eat at their

WALLFLOWERS

little dinky tables—but we are going to dance, too. That'll be some fun. I just long for a good swing about."

Prentice whistled a popular air and indulged in a few steps about the small tent. Then he looked at Whitney, who stood as still as a statue.

"What's the matter, man? See a ghost?"

"No, I was only thinking—"

"You certainly were thinking. Were you thinking you had left your evening clothes behind, neglected to pack them in your knapsack, or something of the kind? Why, man alive, it's your uniform, your bloomin' khaki that's taking you to the exclusive home of the Hunters. You don't think you are being asked because you are *you*, do you? You're a

WALLFLOWERS

poor soldier away from home and loved ones, you're an object of consideration if not commiseration—that's what's getting you to this dance tonight. Three cheers for the Hunters of Huntersville, I say."

"It wasn't the clothes I was thinking about—I like this rig, tell the truth, better than a 'swallow-tail' for dancing, or any other time. And the handiness and neatness of these very uniforms is going to, I believe, bring about a revolution in the style of men's clothes—for everyday wear at least. But I was just thinking that a friend of mine, a girl—yes, I think she knows the Hunters."

"Oh, it was a beautiful vision you were staring at, then! It wasn't a ghost."

Whitney felt he would explode if he didn't confide in someone about Betty.

WALLFLOWERS

Prentice was a man of his own kind, fortunately.

“Yes, it *was* a vision, old fellow,” he said musingly, “and she is a beautiful *vision*, I am afraid, and that is all.”

“Oh, cheer up,” Prentice said, without asking any question as to the reason for the gloomy note. “You’ll make up again. Wait until she sees you really embarking and then she’ll come over, tears and all.”

“But the trouble is, I haven’t any right to expect tears. It would be some comfort if I thought I had.”

“Well, set about giving her the right to weep. Where is she?”

“I don’t even know that—I hadn’t time when I was at home to locate her. She was away visiting somewhere, and that’s all I knew.”

WALLFLOWERS

“We’ll send out scouts for her,” Prentice said comfortingly. “We’ll hire a whole force of detectives to find her, if need be.”

“But she might not even want me to find her,” Whitney answered disconsolately.

“Brace up, man,” Prentice demanded. “There isn’t a girl living that doesn’t want her knight to scale her castle wall and carry her off on a charger, willy-nilly. You forget I have four sisters, and have, therefore, had a most unusual opportunity to study maiden foibles upon their native heath. You haven’t any sister, you know, so girls are more or less a mystery to you. I’ll bet we’ll find—what’s her name?”

“Betty,” Whitney confided.

WALLFLOWERS

“Betty. That’s a deucedly cunning little name, do you know I think? Where does she hail from?”

“Her people are Virginians, but they have lived here in the East for a long time. One of her brothers was at college with me. That’s how I met her.”

“I like that: Miss Betty, of Virginia. By the by, old chap, here we are, wearing the same uniform, and fighting the same ‘cause,’ when your grandfather and mine were, literally, at swords’ points something like fifty years ago. My folks are Virginians, also, you know. But, as one chap’s put it in a song, ‘It doesn’t make much difference now who wore the blue or grey.’ ”

The two young men in khaki fell into serious mood. Both had heard stories of

WALLFLOWERS

Civil War happenings, and were glad that they, grandsons of fighters, could, as so many others had done and were doing, “bury the hatchet” for all time through battling for a cause that was common, the cause of Democracy, the cause of the freedom of men, a cause that was not only national but universal.

III

The spacious estate of the Hunters was, indeed, like a glimpse of fairyland. The men in khaki who marched in double file up the long driveway thought so. Lanterns gleamed like fireflies through the trees, and banners and bunting were festooned everywhere. Somewhere an orchestra, screened by shrubs, was playing entrancing, dreamy waltz music. Some of the men, at least, felt at home in the surroundings, and every one had the comforting thought that he would be a welcome guest and an honored one as well. Pretty girls in ravishing frocks flitted about here and there. The evening was

WALLFLOWERS

planned to be a success, and it was safe to say it would be.

When Edward Prentice found chance, he whispered to Whitney: "I'll present you, personally, to the Hunter girls as soon as I can. I'll tell 'em about your greatness, you know—boom your stock."

"Don't do it," Whitney protested. "I'm here just as an ordinary soldier. What better would a fellow want for himself just now, what more honor?"

"Oh, but you know how these things go," Prentice answered, speaking less from the idealistic standpoint than the worldly. "And why shouldn't a man have the benefit of all he's worked for and earned, anyway?"

Some time later when Prentice returned to where Whitney was standing with a

WALLFLOWERS

group of his comrades and a bevy of laughing and chatty girls, he caught him by the arm and whispered that the moment had arrived, that dancing would soon begin, and the Misses Hunter, with several of their house guests, were waiting to receive him. Whitney excused himself and promised to be back in a moment. He was interested in the group of bright girls that had seemed to have especially taken him and a few others in tow.

Whitney followed Prentice from the wide veranda to a long, brilliantly lighted room decked with flowers, the floor canvas-covered. The bright lights made him blink for a moment. Prentice piloted him to the farther end of the room. The Misses Hunter, surrounded by a group

WALLFLOWERS

of young men and women, were awaiting them. The daintiest and most petite of the girls of the group was a little in the background. Whitney's name was pronounced before she turned. Betty— Betty Andrews! For a moment the soldier staggered back as he would not have done before a whole battery. But with the girl's eyes turned upon him, he groped for something to take hold of, or an opportunity to run. He did not know which. But Betty had seen him, and colored vividly. So had the man with whom she was in conversation, smiling up into his face in Betty's own witching way, a fact that did not escape Whitney. And the man? Judson Winters! How in thunder did Winters come there? But he was everywhere. Hardly had the Hunter

WALLFLOWERS

girls given their cordial greeting to the soldier guest than Winters pounced upon him. His manner was seemingly joy itself at the meeting. Betty only nodded her head when her friends turned to present to her the man she already knew but now made no sign of knowing. Winters looked at Betty scrutinizingly, his face wearing the expression that always sent Whitney into a frenzy. As Whitney and the others turned away, he heard Winters distinctly say, the remark plainly toned to reach his ear: "Why, Miss Andrews, I thought you knew Rob Whitney *well*! He has your picture on his desk in his rooms out West—he has quite a *collection* of girls, in fact—his 'wall-flowers,' the fellows call them."

Betty's face flamed. The idea of her

WALLFLOWERS

picture being displayed with a *collection*! It was the collection idea that ruffled Betty's serenity. She did not stop at the moment, though, to realize this. Had hers been the sole and only portrait adorning the rooms of Robert Whitney her heart would have given a glad little bound, even though it had been strictly bidden not to.

"I hear he's flunked in the orders given his factory by the Government," Winters went on. "I was out there on the same business, but it seems a fellow by the name of Hayden got in some work—grafting, I guess, the two of them—old college friends, and that sort of thing, you know."

This Whitney also heard, but he had moved on and so did not hear Betty's reply. Had he, a great and almost over-

WALLFLOWERS

powering sense of resentment of all that made up the sum of living would have been spared him.

Betty turned like a fiery little savage upon her companion.

“You might speak to me of *failure* upon Mr. Whitney’s part,” she said, “for failure is only within the range of human possibilities, but never of *graft!*”

“You *do* know him then?” Winters said, with meaning inflection.

“Yes, I know him—I have known him for a long time,” Betty confessed.

“Oh, I beg pardon, I am sure, Miss Andrews. Your manner did not indicate the fact when he was presented to you, you know.”

Betty caught the insinuating tone, the same tone that always made Whitney

WALLFLOWERS

feel like trouncing Winters. She bit her lip and said nothing, but her resolve was high; she would expose what she believed was Winters' unscrupulous falsehood regarding the work done for the Government at Whitney's factory.

Winters knew, what Whitney did not know, that Betty Andrews would, in time, come into a large estate, an inheritance from her maternal grandmother. From the hour he had seen Betty's picture on Whitney's desk he made a resolve, to win the girl if it took the crushing of Whitney to do it. He had set about the task in a nervy manner, as he did everything that he wished to accomplish. The invented report concerning the failure of the Government orders filled by Whitney's factory failing to measure up to

WALLFLOWERS

standard, he had taken pains to adroitly circulate. He had chosen as his best working field for this the vicinity of the training camp. That Whitney would be slated for promotion he felt sure, and he meant to prevent this if possible.

The thought which surged through Whitney's mind as he threw himself into the light chatter about him, was that though Winters had not been man enough to enlist, "the draft would get him." He could not escape that dragnet of men. And then he put from him the staggering realization of what it meant to be an unwilling soldier, to face death without that high resolve in the soul, that conviction that the fight had been willingly undertaken because it was right.

Winters' attentions to Betty had been

WALLFLOWERS

so constant and marked that it was whispered about in their set that an engagement was likely to follow. Winters was known as a rising young man, of unusual ability in business matters. He boasted of his commissions by the Government in making purchases, or at least investigating prices and the possibilities of producing concerns. He took good care that all he did was known to those with whom he came in touch. With seeming modesty, and always disclaiming any great credit for his achievements, he, nevertheless, "got over" all he wanted to for his benefit.

Dancing had begun. Whitney was on the shadowy veranda. Unexpectedly, for a moment he found himself quite alone. There were little knots of soldiers and

WALLFLOWERS

girls scattered about here and there, but he leaned against a pillar, vine-twined, and gazed off into the moonlit fields that stretched away toward the westward. Out of the shadows presently flitted a little figure. It hesitated a moment and then came forward.

“It is I—Betty,” the little figure said, the voice hushed to almost a whisper. She saw that Whitney had given a slight start as she approached.

“Betty!” the man in khaki repeated, taking both her hands. It would not be a matter of “faint heart,” he had promised himself, if he came face to face with her again, and he remembered Prentice’s declaration that girls like their knights to scale castle walls and carry them away willy-nilly.

WALLFLOWERS

“But, Robert,” she said, drawing close to him, “I didn’t like—you must have heard him tell me—I didn’t like my picture being—being in a collection—Mr. Winters said it was in your rooms, among—among your—your ‘wallflowers,’ as he said the fellows called the girls’ pictures on your walls.”

“But it isn’t among the ‘wallflowers,’ Betty. Will you believe that? It is—or was—in a little gold frame on my desk, and it was out on the top of the desk through mere chance the evening Winters saw it.”

“Where is it now?” Betty asked wistfully.

“Just at this moment?”

“Yes.”

“Here,” Whitney said, tapping a spot

WALLFLOWERS

just over his heart, "in my inside pocket. I expect to wear it there all through this terrible war—and, Betty, if a bullet pierces my heart, it will have to meet your smiling little face first."

"Oh, don't!" she cried, clinging to his hand. "It will not happen—you will come back to us safely—so many will, you know, why not you?" A sob choked Betty's voice, and tears fell upon the hand she pressed to her cheek.

It was an age-old question that she had asked, a question woman's heart has held since wars began. Whitney had no answer for it. He stooped and quickly kissed Betty's lips.

"You will wait for me, Betty?" he said.

"To the end of life, if need be, Rob," the girl promised.



**" BETTY'S TEAR-DAMP HANDKERCHIEF WAVED
VIGOROUSLY. " (PAGE 59)**

825501

WALLFLOWERS

An hour later, when the "boys" in khaki marched, double file, down the long driveway and back to camp, the band was playing "The Girl I Left Behind Me," and Betty's tiny, tear-damp handkerchief waved vigorously, but "her" soldier did not look back, as a soldier must not, no matter what the call. Straight on he marched, but his heart was beating very hard and happily under a tiny square of pasteboard buttoned close within his jacket.

"Goodbye, Rob—dear, dear Rob," Betty said softly as the long file was swallowed up in the dusk of the highway, and she turned to go indoors.

THE END.

**This book is under no circumstances to be
taken from the Building**

[illegible]**form 410**

SEP 12 1918

1

